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- Author (s):** Eman Ali Mohammed Al-Ghananeem
- Affiliation (s):** AL-Balqa Applied University, Jordan
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# Exploring the Main Similarities Between the Concept of Divinity and Eastern Beliefs among Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism

Eman Ali Mohammed Al-Ghananeem\*  
Al-Balqa Applied University – Jordan

## Abstract

This study will seek to attempt to discuss the concept of divinity in eastern beliefs, especially (Taoism, Hinduism, etc.), and then identify the similarities between the latter beliefs in relation to this concept. The goal of this paper is to find out the reasons why Eastern beliefs strayed from the worship of God and how they developed their concept of divinity. This research is very important because it provides information on the prevailing beliefs in India and China, which believe in the plurality of deities, the worship of ancestors from fathers and grandfathers, the sanctification of the forces of nature, and the practice of spiritual worship to reach the stage of union from God as they believe. This study focuses on answering the questions: Is the concept of divinity unified in eastern beliefs? The study used both the inductive and the deductive method by relying on the mother of books of eastern beliefs like the book of Tao. The most important findings of the study are that the philosophical and moral eastern religions prevailing in India and China are not based on belief in the monotheism of divinity. The study also showed that Eastern beliefs meet in a plurality the gods, and gradually and passed through stages in the search for the god that meets their needs, they worshiped the forces of nature, totem, man, and others, and practiced magic, sorcery, astrology, and other manifestations of polytheism.

**Key words:** Buddhism, Confucius, Divinity, Eastern beliefs, Hinduism, Taoism

## Introduction

The religions of India and China are among the religions that are being practiced at the present time; and there is still a need for research to reveal their truth and goals, noting that most of the references that benefit the specialist in the field of religions were composed by orientalist in their different languages. If we look closely at these earthly religions, we will find that they are quite similar and may meet with the divine laws in some moral aspects.

In general, the concept of divinity in the Eastern religions in India and China is not based on a sound doctrinal basis, it is not in its monotheistic form, but in its plural forms. It is also difficult for the researcher to determine the position of these religions regarding divinity except by tracing the historical development of these man-made religions, and linking all of them to a positive human source, which is the group of the founders of these religions and their students.

There are few studies that have looked at the concept of divinity in religions in general.<sup>1</sup> They have searched for truth/ divinity among many religions, including Brahman, Shiva, Vishnu, or Krishna, and it was found that the concepts of gods, like any other concepts, are enlightened and constrained by the cross-cultural order of the human mind.

The inductive and deductive methods will be used throughout the research. The researcher will employ conceptual analysis, which could include a cursory interpretative review of historical

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\*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr Eman Ali Mohammed Al-Ghananeem, AL-Balqa Applied University, Jordan at [Dreman.ghananeem@bau.edu.jo](mailto:Dreman.ghananeem@bau.edu.jo)

<sup>1</sup>Justin L. Barrett, "Cognitive constraints on Hindu Concepts of the Divine," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (1998): 608-619; Judith Issroff, "Reflections about God (Yehovah) and Religion," In *Beyond Belief* (London: Routledge, 2018), 99-117.

sources and academic viewpoints in order to draw replicable and reliable conclusions about the settings in which texts (or other significant sources) are used, this study employs a method called content analysis. Having stated that, the researcher makes meaning of texts encountered in the situations where the current study is done.

The scope of this paper will be limited as it would not be able to tackle all of the Indian and Chinese thoughts and beliefs. Moreover, it will be only about what the author has understood about the subject of Indian. Hence, this study seeks to determine the concept of divinity in the most important living eastern religions, which are embraced by nearly half of the world's population, and have followers and a large spread, and we are trying to reach similarities between these beliefs in relation to the concept of divinity on the other hand. For this purpose, this study has been divided into three sections as follows: Section (I): Introduction. Section (II): Discussion The concept of divinity in Hindu, Taoist, Confucius and Buddhism. Section (III): Conclusion.

## 2. Discussion

### 2.1. The Concept of Divinity among Hindus

Hindu religious thought conflicts with regard to God as they uphold two completely different tendencies described by Dr. Ahmed Shalaby, namely: the tendency of monotheism and the tendency of pluralism; although the tendency of pluralism is stronger and more widespread.<sup>2</sup> That is why we find that the issue of Hindu deification is of a complex and contradictory nature. It includes philosophical views and various religious doctrines, such as abstraction and pluralism, solutions, ancestor worship, animals, nature, and even the worship of nothingness. This can actually be observed by tracing the history of Hinduism, which did not leave a deity without reverence and glorification, whether he was a lower deity, or the dirtiest thing in the eyes of anyone, or an imaginary deity or an image of the mind without evidence or proof of its divinity. As for the religious aspect in the country of India, it is an example in its many spiritual trends and religious beliefs. There are those who worship cows, and those who sanctify the forces of nature; and those who worship humans, along with those who unite God. In any case, the idea of divinity among Hindus can be expressed as follows in the following subsections.

#### 2.1.1. Abstraction in Hindu Thought

Initially, the quest was to know the Brahma, and determine what it is through symbols, secrets, religious rituals, and psychological functions of human beings.<sup>3</sup> When they were unable to achieve the knowledge of Brahma and determine what it is; Hindu thought resorted to another non-human authority, this is through the authority of the Holy Books.<sup>4</sup> There is a logical connection between the idea of abstraction and Maya who sees the world as an illusion and a mirage, and the source of this correlation is that the world is based on Brahman, so if Brahma is the basis of the world as nothingness without limit, and it is not defined, then the structure of the abstract world based on this foundation is a mirage<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>Ahmed Shalaby, *The Great Religions of India* (Cairo: The Egyptian Renaissance Library, 1984), 160.

<sup>3</sup>Imad Al-Din Al-Jubouri, *God, Existence and Man* (Beirut: The Arab Foundation for Studies, 1986), 36.

<sup>4</sup>Abdul Radi Abdul Mohsen, *The Problem of Deification in India's Religious Thought* (Riyadh: Al-Faisal Cultural House, 2002), 36.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

As for monotheism, there are those who segregates the notion from the Hindu religion, and this is confirmed by Gandhi, who says<sup>6</sup>: As for the belief in the existence and non-existence of the Creator, both are equal, and it is not necessary for any of the Hindu men to believe in the Creator, for he is a Hindu whether he believes or not Hinduism, although he continued to adhere to Hindu beliefs despite their complexity and contradictions, and considers Hinduism to be the religion that he should be proud of.

### 2.1.2. The Hindu Trinity

Hinduism settled in the holy trinity, which is: Brahma (the creator), Shiva (the destroyer), and Vishnu (the preserver).<sup>7</sup> The Indian Trinity is ranked eighth among the sacred triangles in the religious history of people<sup>8</sup>. It should be noted here that the Hindu trinity (Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva) was not the first trinity in history since the first trinity dates back to the civilization of the Egyptians, namely, the Egyptian-Abydos Trinity.<sup>9</sup>

The form of the Hindu Trinity was not limited to being influenced by previous beliefs, but went beyond the details of the myth of Brahma (the Creator), one of the Trinity, with the story of the creation of the world contained in the Hindu holy book, *The Monism* where it states: These beings were dark and unseen, and had no distinguishing marks, and they did not know their knowledge was not realized with evidence, rather it was unknown, as if she was in a deep slumber, then their gentle Brahma hidden in himself, and the manifestation of beings with his power, with the eternal and eternal power, created the elements and their like, and revealed himself and destroyed the darkness, and it seemed to him to create creatures from his body, So He created the water first by thought, then threw his seed into it, and the seed became a golden egg with a luster like the sun, and from it emanated from it Brahma Himself, the grandfather of the whole world. The six directions and the seas, then He resurrected from Himself the Spirit who is the truest of the three attributes, and He created the five senses, then He created all creatures.”<sup>10</sup>

Vishnu (the god of love) is the most prominent member of the Trinity, as he had many incarnations, and these incarnations were worshiped as deities, which makes the incarnation closely related to the trend of pluralism, and some of them still have followers such as Rama, Krishna, and Buddha<sup>11</sup>. Vishnu is known as "The Preserver" within the Trimurti, the triple deity of supreme divinity that includes Brahma and Shiva. In Vaishnavism, Vishnu is the supreme being who creates, protects, and transforms the universe. In the Shaktism tradition, the Goddess, or Adi Shakti, is described as the supreme Para Brahman, yet Vishnu is revered along with Shiva and Brahma. Tridevi is stated to be the energy and creative power of each, with Lakshmi being the equal complementary partner of Vishnu.<sup>12</sup> Whenever the world is threatened with evil, chaos, and

<sup>6</sup>Muhammad Al-Azami, *Studies in Judaism, Christianity, Indian Religions and Good News in Hindu Books* (Riyadh: Al-Rushd Library, 2013), 16.

<sup>7</sup>E. Beltramini, "Cosmic Christ and National God in the Unknown Christ of Hinduism," *Journal of Indian Theology* 14, No.1 (2021): 8-28.

<sup>8</sup>F. Al-Damluji, *History of the Gods* (Baghdad: Al-Shabab Press, 1954), 29-31.

<sup>9</sup>Amiya P Sen, "Introduction," Special Issue on "Hinduism: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Developments," *Religions* 12, no. 2 (2021): 85.

<sup>10</sup>*Manosmerti (The Holy Book of the Hindus)*, translated by: Ihsan Haqqi, Dar Al-Waqqa Al-Arabiya, n.d.

<sup>11</sup>Jeffrey Barinder, *Religious Beliefs of Peoples*, translated by Imam Abdul Fattah Imam (Kuwait: The World of Knowledge Series, 1993), 100.

<sup>12</sup>Abdul Mohsen, Abdul Radi, *The Problem of Deification in India's Religious Thought*, 36.

destructive forces, Vishnu descends in the form of an avatar (incarnation) to restore the cosmic order, and protect dharma.

The word Shiva is used as an adjective in the Rig Veda (c. 1700–1100 BCE), as an epithet for several Rigvedic deities, including Rudra. The term Shiva also connotes "liberation, final emancipation" and "the auspicious one"; this adjectival usage is addressed to many deities in Vedic literature. The term evolved from the Vedic Rudra-Shiva to the noun Shiva in the Epics and the Puranas, as an auspicious deity who is the "creator, reproducer and dissolver".<sup>13</sup>

### 2.1.3. The Multiplicity of Gods

Hindu thought tends to the idea of plurality often with regard to deities, and pluralism in Hinduism has reached a large amount, as they had for every natural force that benefits them or harms them, a "god" that they worship and seek help with in adversity such as water, fire, rivers, mountains, etc., and they used to claim those gods; To bless them their offspring and their wealth of livestock, crops and fruits, and victory over their enemies.<sup>14</sup>

At the beginning, the Hindus looked with reverence at the manifestations of nature and its forces, so they sanctified it and made for each manifestation a deity that moves it or inhabits it, and they sanctified some animals, especially the cow. We find in the books of the Vedas references to the primitive stage of the issue of divinity in the Hindu religion, as the worship of the forces of nature spread from the fifteenth century BC to the stage of codification of the Vedas in the eighth century BC.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, the multiplicity of gods in the Hindu religion has no limits, the Hindus sanctified everything that represents the existents, such as: the manifestations of nature: (clouds, the course of paths in the field, the sun, thunderbolts, wind, sky, earth, rain, light, storm, dawn, fire...and others), and human crafts and professions: (shepherd of agriculture, master of architecture, industry, weapons, bandits, harvesting etc.), and animals, such as: turtle, pig, mice, elephant head, lion, horse head, cow, and snakes. And they revere the most dangerous and dangerous types of snakes, the Naga, and they have a great status among them, and they offer them offerings of milk and bananas, and they are placed at the entrances to their burrows, just as the Hindus sanctify humans such as Rama, the defender of Brahma, and Krishna, the owner of the ax, and the killer of the unjust king.<sup>16</sup>

### 2.1.4. Unity of Existence

The Hindus believe that the soul (Atman) is eternal, continuous, uncreated, and when it is stripped of material phenomena, it begins to return to the greater soul (the way of return) and all life is forms of the only original power, because they believe that God is everything, and that everything is God, and that is The meaning of the unity of existence. Therefore, the Hindus believed that everything is Brahma, everything is worshiped.

And it sees that the entire existence in the universe is a single existence that is (God), and a congruence between this being and the world as it unites with nature, beings and humans, and lies

<sup>13</sup>Suleiman Mazhar, *The Story of Civilization* (Cairo: Madbouly Library, 2002), 95.

<sup>14</sup>Shalaby, *The Great Religions of India*, 36.

<sup>15</sup>Muhammad Al-Araibi, *The Living Positive Religions in the Lower and Far Shrines* (Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr Al-Lebanese, 1995), 11.

<sup>16</sup>Muhammad Ahmad Al-Khatib, *Comparing Religions* (Amman: Dar Al-Masira, 2009), 406.

in them, so it becomes the only real existence, and the world becomes manifestations of this absolute existence.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.2. The Concept of Divinity in the Taoist Religion

After Laozi's death, the Chinese began to worship him ~~himself~~, and temples and statues were built for him, making him a deity, and they said that his mother carried a heavenly lamb in him, and they believed that he was born with a full mind and in age, because he resided in his mother's womb for eighty years. The followers of the popular Chinese religion believe that most of the gods are of the people who showed extraordinary abilities during their lives, such as (Guan De), who had a high status in the third century AD.<sup>18</sup>

Taoism did not discuss about life after death, so many Chinese quickly turned to the Buddhist religion that spreads in China, but it differs from Buddhism that had spread in India. Buddhism began to explain to them the state of *Nirvana*.

In any case, the Taoists believe in the attributes of God, that he has no sound, no image, that he is eternal and does not perish, and that his existence precedes the existence of others; and he is the origin of all beings and his spirit flows in them. This belief is similar to other religions covered in this study in that it holds to the notion of the unity of existence.

They say that (Tao) is an absolute being, which is the meaning of the universe as it is not separate from the universe, rather it is a fundamental entry into it, and from it all existents emanate, and their belief in the unity of existence made them say that the Creator and the creature are one thing, and its parts are not separated except to meet the two of them at a stage the yard.<sup>19</sup>

It is clear that the deity in Taoism is the Tao, and he can reveal himself in the forces of light and the forces of darkness, which were issued from one origin, the Great One, which is the more correct name for God.<sup>20</sup>

In general, the doctrine of Taoism is based on following subsections.

### 2.2.1. The Doctrine of Trinity

Followers of Taoism believe that the head of their three deities are: the founder of the religion (Laozi), the emperor (Gadi), who is the ruler of the universe for them; and then the first being in heaven (Tao). The Tao should remain a priority to the gods because it contains the secret of the universe, and the Taoist philosophy differentiated between two cosmic forces: one of them is positive (Yang), the masculine principle which is heaven; and the other is negative (Yin) the feminine principle which is the earth.<sup>21</sup>

### 2.2.2. The Doctrine of Dualism (Yin and Yang)

One of the most basic ideas in Lao Tse philosophy is that the universe is in a continuous state within the field of force that is formed by the two principles (yin and yang), i.e. masculine and

<sup>17</sup>Al-Jubouri, *God, Existence and Man*, 70.

<sup>18</sup>Muhammad Nimr Al-Madani, *Al-Taawiya* (Port Said: Dar Damascus, 2010), 29.

<sup>19</sup>Franz Höllinger, and Lorenz Makula, "Religiosity in the Major Religious Cultures of the World," *International Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 5 (2021): 345-359.

<sup>20</sup>Asmigolevsky, *Secrets of Gods and Religions* (translated by: Hassan Mikhail Ishaq, Damascus: Aladdin House, 2006), 315.

<sup>21</sup>Fawzi Muhammad Hamid, *The World of Religions between Myth and Truth* (Tripoli: The World Islamic Call Society, 1999), 246.

feminine, which are not seen as contradictory elements but rather as complementary; and their source (Tao) is the basis of the interaction between them. And Laozi's book showed that everything contains a contradiction between its two ends and a mutual transformation between them, and proclaims: "Unhappiness comes from happiness, and happiness comes from unhappiness."<sup>22</sup>

### 2.2.3 The Doctrine of the Unity of Existence

The concept of divinity in the Taoist religion is linked to the doctrine of pantheism and the unity of existence, through austerity, isolation, and estrangement from the world.<sup>23</sup>

#### 2.3 The Concept of Divinity for the Followers of Confucius

Confucius revived the ancient religious teachings, wrote down their origins. It is note-worthy that Confucius was not a claimant of a prophetic message but was rather a wise philosopher who preached Ethics. The Confucian belief regarding the concept of divinity is based on the following teachings.

#### 2.3.1. The Great Deity (God of Heaven)

The greatest deity in the skies is worshipped by the Chinese, and only kings and princes are allowed to specifically worship and offer sacrifices to him. And The greatest deity in Chinese belief is (the master of the gods), also known as Tian. When they refer to the sky as being worshipped, they do not mean the blue dome; rather, they mean those spheres and their orbits, as well as the power that controls them and how they interact with the earth through things like rain, winds, and other natural phenomena. All of the forces in the planet are moving in accordance with a precise and organised system and are under the control of heaven.<sup>24</sup>

Confucius declared that there is only one strong-willed God in existence, the God of Heaven, and he was the first Chinese to claim the existence of monotheistic care in China when it was immersed in the darkness of paganism. He was not himself a subject of worship or deification, and he did not accept that, because He viewed the god as a symbol of the forces of nature. The forefathers' souls are all that remain.<sup>25</sup>

I see that the matter remained contradictory between his recognition of the one God, and his recognition of the multiplicity of gods that prevailed among the Chinese, as I saw an article translated from the Chinese entitled *Confucius sayings About the Gods* saying that Confucius did not care about the gods themselves, but was concerned with the principles of morals, and that he relied mainly on the glorification of man, and the focus on his true strength.<sup>26</sup> Accordingly, some Chinese recognize his concept of divinity while the others glorify Confucius and sanctify him without believing in his divinity.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Al-Tawi T-Ching Laozo, *The Gospel of Taoist wisdom in China*, Arabic drafting of the text by Firas Al-Sawah, (Damascus: Aladdin House, 2000), 47.

<sup>23</sup>Muhammad Hassan Mahdi Al-Bakhit, *Stands on the Most Important Ancient Man-made Religions* (The Modern World of Books, 2014), 45

<sup>24</sup>John Kohler, *Ancient Eastern Thought*, trans., Kamel Youssef Hussein, ed., Imam Abdel Fattah (Kuwait: The World of Knowledge, 1990), 241.

<sup>25</sup>Asaad Al-Shamrani, *The Statement in Comparing Religions* (Beirut: Dar Al-Nafaes, 2020), 160.

<sup>26</sup>David Curtis Wright, *The History of China*, ABC-CLIO (2020).

<sup>27</sup>Yimeng Xu, *Comparative Studies on Confucian and Christian Ethics* (2021).

### 2.3.2. The Worship of Spirits that Control the Phenomena of Nature

The Chinese accepted the Confucian religion with multiple deities, each with its own function and control over a specific thing. The Chinese worship all these forces that control the phenomena of nature, and everything in the universe, and in return they believe that the forces of the earth are worshiped by the kings, and they have the worship of the forces of the heaven. We find here a class system in worship; the kings have special gods that they worship only.

### 2.3.3. Worshipping the Spirits of Ancestors

The Chinese believe that the souls of their ancestors remain with them after their death. Furthermore, they have become sacred and have the right to be worshiped; and it is obligatory to fulfill their vows. Their appreciation of fathers and grandfathers exceeds the limit of respect and righteousness to the point of worship; and offerings were made to them in order to obtain from them goodness and blessing.

### 2.3.4. The Doctrine of Unity of Being

I have previously defined the concept of pantheism, which means the doctrine that the universe conceived of as a whole is God and, conversely, that there is no God but the combined substance, forces, and laws that are manifested in the existing universe. The worshipping rituals of the Chinese includes music, dancing and singing, and they feel that their joy with gods. The Chinese used to mix real facts and the supernatural as they believe that thousands of good and bad spirits were fluttering around them surrounding. They hired magicians who often use turtle shells to reveal future and to contemplate the motions of the stars, so that they could direct their homes toward the wind and the water, sunlight and rain water.

## 2.4. Divinity in Buddhism

Buddha established his call based on obtaining knowledge, or a spiritual experience that cannot be achieved through words, as he sees that the truth is not known by theories, but by walking on its own path. But he tends to deny it sometimes. The reason for this is that Buddha basically did not come with a religion as mentioned previously, and he avoided talking about everything related to theological and metaphysical research, and he did not talk about the subtle issues in the universe, and he forbade his companions and visitors to talk about it.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps the description of religion is not appropriate for Buddhism; As long as it does not believe in the Lord of Deism, and does not believe in the Hindus' devotion to them, Buddha ridiculed, in one of his sermons, those who say the existence of God, and for his neglect of the issue of God, or the tendency to deny it sometimes, this led to the Brahmins of his time to brand him as an atheist.<sup>29</sup> So the issue of divinity in the Buddhist religion is still in great dispute, as its followers were divided into two sects, each of which has its own evidence.<sup>30</sup> As for the evidence that proves that Buddha believed in the greatest deity, they inferred by reason and transmission.

<sup>28</sup>V. N. Mahathera, *The Buddha and his Teachings*, BPS. (2021).

<sup>29</sup>Wong Chin Yew, Abd Hair Awang, Sivapalan Selvadurai, Mansor Mohd Noor, and Peng Kee Chang, "A Comparative Study of Islam and Buddhism: A Multicultural Society Perspective," *Religions* 12, no. 12 (2021): 1098.

<sup>30</sup>Dennis Alan Winters, "Landscape and Divinity Spoken in the Same Breath," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (2022): 27.



As for the mind: religion cannot be imagined without acknowledgment of the Lord. Because it is a common basis among all religions, and that is why deniers avoid calling Buddhism a religion. As for the transmission: the word (*Ishwur*) came to mean (god). The deniers respond to this that the concept of God without attributes is an abstract thought, which does not fulfill the desired purpose, for Buddha did not describe him with a description that makes him exist!

Those who establish the issue of divinity in the belief of Buddha believe that Buddhists do not believe the Brahmins believe in the divinity of Brahma (the Creator), and they prefer Buddha over him. This, in the beginning Buddhism begins as an intellectual philosophy in the hands of Gautama Buddha who rejected cast system of Hindus and continuous cycle of rebirth. It was his utmost believe that Hinduism doesn't protect people from pain and injustices. Eventually, the followers of Buddha started preaching his teachings as a form of religion and constructed prayers and rituals, henceforth giving birth to Buddhism.

### 3. Similarities between Eastern Religions Regarding the Idea of Primacy

#### 3.1. Triangulation Idea

Scholars of the history of religions confirm that religious researches taken from all positive oriental sources are not without mentioning one of the types of the Trinity, or the triple generation, that is: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Bible, and (Dwan) says in his book *The First Population of Europe: The ancient pagans believed that God is one, but he has three persons, and he says if we look towards India, we see the greatest, and the most famous of their worship is the Trinity, that is, to say that God has three persons.*<sup>31</sup> Many religions have preserved various deposits of their ancient beliefs, and the idea of the Trinity is one of the most important beliefs that persisted in India and China.

The belief of some followers of Buddhism is not free from the doctrine of the Trinity, and they include in it a fourth person (the Buddha), and they created a trinity for the Buddha himself, which includes (Buddha, the law, the meeting). And they worship a triune god and call him (Fu), and they depict him in their temples in the form of the idols found in India, and they say (Fu) is one but in many forms. This may be for the current Buddhists, but the ancient Buddhists were not known about the Trinity.<sup>32</sup>

In Taoism, as we have discussed before, we find that the Holy Trinity is composed of the power (Tao, Yin, and Yang), i.e. the first source, from which the masculine and feminine emerged, and from which all creatures were formed.

#### 3.2. Personification and Human Deities

By embodiment, it means: the appearance of God Almighty Or one of their gods in an earthly form (be it any physical or human form) but at the same time has the sanctification of the god embodied and can wield powers even in the human form. Such embodiment can be seen in Hindu avatar of Vishnu who was manifested in the image of mythical characters.

#### 3.3. Pantheism

The belief in the unity of existence is one of the most prominent features of the eastern religions such as: Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism etc. The idea of the unity of existence is clear in the Hindu religion in its recognition that God is the real existence, and that the entire universe is God, and what is in existence is only one thing, and God (Brahma) has all the attributes; Because it

<sup>31</sup>Hassan Al-Bash, *Comparative Science of Religions* (Damascus: Dar Qutaiba, 2011), 104.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

includes the characteristics of all things, yet it rises above its resemblance, and it is the essence of the hidden world that is not limited by the restrictions of time, and it is the master of the universe, and it is one if we imagine it in its existence as a single individual, and if we look at its parts such as humans and creatures, then it is a composite. The doctrine of pantheism appears in Hinduism clearly as it depicts a unity between man and the Absolute (or between Atman and Brahman), and according to the *Upanishads*, the great powers (*Atman*) are ultimately one thing.

Also, the belief in an absolute that transcends human qualities is a well-known belief in Buddhism, and it is a picture of the idea of unity of existence that appears in Buddhist devotional applications, which seek enlightenment and absolute union. The philosophy of pantheism is a common belief in Hinduism and Confucianism, which believed in the ancient religious beliefs prevalent in China, as well as clearly found in Taoist philosophy and beliefs.

Buddhism also established the link between man and his spiritual world through a sense of unity between them, which is the stage that the Buddhist reaches in his life after he is stripped of his wishes and ignorance. Although the idea of pantheism is not Buddhist in origin, and it has no roots in the Buddha's *Gospel*. Rather, it is an original idea in Hinduism, and it became popular and supported by texts from the *Ramayana*, where it came in which<sup>33</sup>: God is the extension of eternity and its ebb and flow where the action and the agent are one, and God says to the mind: I am the Being. The world is nothing but my sight, and images, materials, and essences are nothing but my elements.

Likewise, Confucianism was influenced by the philosophy of pantheism through their concept of the gods and their relationship with them. They worship the sun, moon, planets, mountains and rivers next to the god of the sky, and they revere angels, and the spirits of ancestors, and they believe in the survival of their souls to sanctify them and make sacrifices to them. However, they do not believe in karma, reward, or punishment in the afterlife, but rather reward and punishment in the life of this world.

### 3.4. Solutions and Union

The saying of solutions and union is one of the most important prevailing and apparent beliefs in the religions of India, China, and most eastern philosophies were not free from it. Its influence appears in many of the esoteric beliefs that appeared throughout history:

- We find in Hinduism the texts of the *Upanishads* depicting the real man as the one who works for union, or melting into the infinite, and that the ultimate goal of the Indian philosopher is to eliminate his desires and kill his lusts; To achieve union with Brahma, or the annihilation of the individual self in the comprehensive ego, and the way to this union is through practicing spiritual exercises, meditation and knowledge, and neglecting the desires of the whole body.
- It also shows solutions and union in Buddhism through the realization of *nirvana*: a state that a Buddhist may reach in his life and does not lead to the endless cycle of reincarnation.
- We discover that the core of Taoism is God's solutions in beings as a cosmic energy that flows throughout them. Without it, God cannot exist by Himself.

### 3.5. Sufism

Eastern religions, whether found in India or China, are dominated by the mystical character that calls for austerity and asceticism, renunciation of life and leaving its sanctuary, self-torture and

<sup>33</sup>Al-Jubouri, *God, Existence and Man*, 80.

harshness, all of which are philosophical ideas linked to the concept of divinity; because adherents believes that it is the way that leads humans to union with God.<sup>34</sup>

In most of the positive eastern beliefs, we find people who refrain from the joys of life and fights the body's desires in an endeavor to eliminate them. By doing so they can either attain the immortality of the soul to resume life in a new, pure and immaculate form. The hermit, the divine, the monk, the mystic, the ascetic, the pious, the saint, and numerous other titles carries similar meaning.

### 3.6. Myths and Legends

Most of human cultures share their fear of the unknown, which is an attempt to explain the ambiguity associated with the origin of the universe and creation, and how it developed to its current conditions, and resorted to imagination, thus myths were born. Eastern religions in India and China are full of myths and legends, especially in the accounts of the lives and births of their founders, as mentioned previously in the story of Buddha, which was more like a myth, and what was mentioned in the story of Confucius as a strange birth, and the story of Laozi, the founder of Taoism.

An example of these legends is that the Buddhists made the death of Buddha a mythical event akin to his birth. The narrations mention that once Buddha saw a hungry tiger, so he gave her his body as a mercy to her children, and they brought his triangle, and built seven graves on him, then some kings took that ashes, and built eight on him. Sixty graves, then the graves were blessed, and they filled Buddhist lands.<sup>35</sup>

### 3.6. Reincarnation

The idea of reincarnation occupied a great place among the man-made religions which happens to be a fundamental doctrine in India. Whenever we mention India, the doctrine of reincarnation comes to mind, but Hinduism differs from Buddhism in its belief in reincarnation.

Reincarnation is related to the guilty and the wretched souls that leave the earthly world with death, and settle in new bodies; To atone for its previous shortcomings, and purify themselves from them, if they are great sins that have befallen the bodies of position animals such as insects, cats, dogs, etc., to rise again in future roles from a lowly animal to a superior animal and so on, and keep reincarnating bodies until they take the path of salvation and piety and ceases this cycle. This belief was founded upon and branched out from all other pagan beliefs, and the doctrine of transmigration and reincarnation is considered the cornerstone of every pagan belief. Hinduism acknowledges reincarnation and considers it the goal that the individual reaches through his transition from one phase to another, and from one body to another, and accordingly the individual soul has many lives. And actions in his life, for the soul is the basis of reincarnation and his resurrection in it, and accordingly it is immortal and does not die due to its repeated reproduction.

As for Buddhism, its position on the reincarnation of the soul and its connection with *karma* is different from the position of Hinduism. Buddhism denied the transmigration of the soul, declaring that *karma* is what that is reincarnated and it is what sends man to a new life, while reincarnation then is the renewal of life on earth.

<sup>34</sup>A. Hussain, "Sufism in Hindu and Musalman," available at SSRN 3865042, (2021).

<sup>35</sup>Muhammad Hassan Mahdi Al-Bakhit, *Stands on the Most Important Ancient Man-made Religions* (The Modern World of Books, 2014), 45

### 3.7. Worship of the Forces of Nature

All man-made religions share in the worship of the forces of nature. Hindus respectfully looked at the manifestations of nature, and made each phenomenon a deity, so the gods abounded among them, with these deities varying in rank and strength, as previously mentioned in the talk about Hinduism, as well as we find that the followers of Buddhism did not depart from Hinduism in the end. In many of its rituals, including the worship of the forces of nature.

As for the Chinese, they worshiped the forces that control the things entrusted to them and believe that everything has a force that controls it and runs it, The most important elements of that worship is the fear of the supernatural, the worship of spirits lurking in all parts, the sanctification of the terrible images on earth, and the ability to produce and procreate; and the fear and worship of the sky, and reverence for the refreshing sun and abundant rain in it. The Chinese considered the sun and rain to be elements of harmony, and the connection between life above the earth, and the hidden and capable forces in the sky.

### 3.8. Intolerance to Worship Ancestral Spirits

All previous man-made religions believe that the soul is of a different nature from spirits, but they consider it a natural extension of their lives. With their beliefs, they bring good and evil, because their souls after leaving the body have become sacred and dominating, so they work to appease them, and they appear prominently in the religions of China, where they maintained the worship of ancestors.

The ancient man did not stop at the limits of sanctifying the phenomena of nature with its fears and joys, nor at the sanctification and worship of some animals that represent to him manifestations of fertility or wisdom, but transcended them, so he worshiped the spirit of (ancestors, kings and heroes), around whom legends and stories revolved that glorified their heroic deeds. Humans in India and China sanctified the spirit of their ancestors, made sacrifices to it and worshiped it out of awe, respect and love. It is striking that the worship of ancestors was not free from the ancient earthly religions, in general, and it is more evident in Confucianism and Taoism.

The worship of ancestors, idols and magic arose from believing in the spirits of fathers and grandfathers who were the heads of their families; and the reins of matters were in their hands as they were more experienced and knowledgeable in the affairs of life such as hunting, and protection from disasters. If they died, their souls would continue to flutter in family sky to protect them from calamities. So, the grandchildren are required to worship the spirits of these ancestors.

### 3.9. The Offering

No religion was free from the idea of the sacrifice. The sacrifice offered to God is considered as one of the most important sacred religious rituals in the concept of divinity in which man seeks to obtain contentment, mercy and forgiveness. All religions, whether revealed or man-made religions are not free from the idea of the sacrifice, although they differed in its type or method of offering. We find it a common belief in the religions of India and China with the different nature of this sacrifice.

Among most religions, the sacrifice is considered as a gift offered to the gods and it is a worshipping ritual and supplication for the believers. The owners of man-made religions believe that God takes it in mysterious ways and the reluctance to make offerings returns the owner to misery and hardships.

## 4. Conclusion

There are also many beliefs prevailing in India and China, which believe in the plurality of deities and the worship of ancestors from fathers and grandfathers and the sanctification of the

forces of nature, as they practice spiritual worship to reach the stage of union from God as they believe.

In general, the study showed that the philosophical and ethical oriental religions prevailing in India and China are not based on belief in the monotheism of divinity. The results also showed that eastern beliefs meet in the multiplicity of gods. They gradually passed through stages in the search for the deity that meets their needs, so they worshiped the forces of nature, the totem, the human being, and others, followed by practicing magic, sorcery, astrology, and other manifestations of polytheism. The deities of Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism are linked to a positive human source represented by a group of the founding sages of these religions, their disciples and followers. The heritage books that they transmitted is the main source on which beliefs, legends, and myths related to the concept of divinity were founded.

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